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Lester Snow  
CALFED Bay-Delta Program  
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Suite 1155  
Sacramento, CA 95814

September 22, 1999

Dear Mr. Snow;

This letter was originally drafted by a previous Rancho Tehama Board of Director in conjunction with a concerned resident, Mr. Jovan Novkovic, whose property borders Elder Creek. We feel that this is a very important issue for the residents of Rancho Tehama and worthy of pursuing again at this time.

We noted with interest an article in the Red Bluff Daily News dated July 7, 1997 expressing Senator Johannessen's concern with the proposed DWR water supplement requiring a 400,000 acre foot "contribution" by the North State. Other news articles have surfaced since that time which reflect the same basic premise. The issue is one of great importance and deserves the attention being drawn, but we believe there is more effort going into proclaiming the problem than in solving it.

As we perceive the issue, the population centers of the State of California (they) are now or will soon be in need of more water than is now available. The Northern Sacramento Valley (we) are being advised that *they* (the State Department of Water Resources) are looking to *us* to share our water with *them*. *They* are apparently willing to purchase the water, including 200,000-acre feet of ground water, and *we* may become obligated to provide and sell *our* water even though many of *our* wells are suffering. The issue that needs to be addressed is not that the State has a water problem (this matter has been boiling for many years), but what the resolution to this problem might be. We North-Statens continue to hunker down and complain while offering no alternative solution to whatever proposal *they* might set forth. *We* don't want to provide water resources to fill *their* swimming pools and water *their* lawns and golf courses.

As you are no doubt aware, the groundwater supply in this area of the North State is already somewhat distressed. The aquifer must be constantly recharged and during some of the leaner water years many North-State wells turn into dry holes. It is note-worthy that even during the dryer winter and spring run-off periods, the State wastes more water than it uses. Auburn Dam was intended to provide a measure of flood control and storage but environmental and seismic concerns relegated it to the tax-dollar wastebasket.

Each year, with regularity, the Sacramento River and tributaries flood resulting in significant downstream damage. Causeways in Yolo and other counties provide some flood relief but eventually the water recedes and flows to the Pacific Ocean.

We suggest that the solution to the California water crisis lies in thoughtful water management.

A series of earth filled dams on the smaller Sacramento River tributaries, such as Elder Creek in Tehama County would restore ground water to Rancho Tehama and allow an emergency exit out of the ranch. The genesis of Elder Creek is the easterly slopes of the Trinity Alps and the coastal range. A 1993 study indicates that the Rancho Tehama groundwater flows from West to East, toward the Sacramento River. The high ridges and mountains constituting these coastal ranges tend to promote both groundwater and surface water flow in the direction of Government Gulch and Elder Creek, which discharges into the Sacramento River.

Each year, Elder Creek is at flood stage for a considerable length of time. This, coupled with similar tributaries, adversely affects downstream flood control conditions in Tehama, Butte, Glenn, Sutter and Yolo counties and the resource is ultimately wasted. We are enclosing photos taken of Elder Creek on the Northwest portion of Rancho Tehama in February of 1997. The circumstance portrayed is an annual event.

Elder Creek constitutes the Northerly border of Rancho Tehama, a Tehama County Planned community development exceeded in population only by Red Bluff and Corning. Rancho Tehama is bordered on the south by Government Gulch, which drains into Elder Creek near the easterly boundary of Rancho Tehama. Approximately one third of the community lots are fully developed and occupied at the present time. A majority of the occupied lots have manufactured homes as the principal dwelling.

Elder Creek could easily sustain a dam in two locations. An earth-filled dam approximately 500 feet in length and 150 feet high just East of the convergence of Government Gulch and Elder Creek could provide flood control and water storage in the 21, 000 acre-foot range. A dam of this magnitude in this location would require that a section of roadway approximately 300 feet in length be raised or bridged in some manner. A dam of this same approximate configuration some 5 to 6 miles upstream and to the West should generate an additional storage approaching a volume of 25,000 acre feet. The first convergence of Government Gulch and Elder Creek could also be another exit out for 4000 residents, since we only have one way in to the ranch and one way out. We have requested emergency access from a property owner at the back of the ranch for this purpose, but he has refused our request. If we had to evacuate from a firestorm the top of the dam would be used for an exit from the back of the ranch. This emergency exit is an issue we also need political assistance with.


These lakes, properly controlled for downstream release would serve multiple purposes; aquifer recharge (satisfying groundwater needs of local inhabitants and farms), flood control (serving a protective environment for the Sacramento area), a more abundant and reliable State water supply (facilitating the DWR supply resolution), improved fish and wildlife habitat (serving the Department of Fish and Game as well as the environmentalists), and recreation facilities (increasing the quality of life for all).

There are some developed properties along Elder Creek, which would need to be purchased. However, the cost should be minimal as the State could purchase and develop lots on higher ground and pay for relocation, essentially effecting a trade with the affected parties – a lot adjacent to a sometimes cantankerous creek-bed in exchange for a lot on or near a scenic lake.

Local support for such an endeavor is considered strong. It is our understanding that the Tehama County Board of Supervisors has unanimously endorsed *the concept*, as has the Rancho Tehama Association Board of Directors. Funding set-aside for proposed groundwater purchases should adequately cover the cost of construction in a relatively short period of time. There are no known seismic hazards.

We would be pleased to meet with you and the Senator to discuss this proposed concept in greater detail and will be happy to entertain any inquiries and/or take you on a tour of the area.

Very Truly Yours,

  
Thomas Damanti  
Chairman  
Rancho Tehama Association  
Board of Directors